

A GENUS AND SPECIES OF MALACHIINAE  
(COL.: MELYRIDAE) NEW TO BRITAIN

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Late in July, 1982, my friend David Appleton (who, coleopterist readers may recall, was the first to find *Axinotarsus marginalis* Lap. in this country) took by beating an oak at the roadside near Titchfield Common, S. Hants., what he at once saw was another small Malachiine new to our fauna. From his description and drawing (*in litt.*) I had no hesitation in identifying it as a species of *Sphinginus* Rey, presumably *S. lobatus* Ol. — using Freude, Harde, & Lohse (1979), where a male of the species is figured. On my advice it was submitted to Mr. P. J. Hammond at the BMNH who was able to confirm the species as that just named, pointing out further that *S. lobatus* was essentially a West European insect and might therefore be expected to occur in Britain.

Meanwhile Mr. Appleton made strenuous efforts to obtain more examples during that and the following summer, without success; indeed it began to look as though the 1982 beetle were a chance importation. Not long ago, however, I received the welcome news that he had just (24.vi.84) swept five specimens from a grassy bank where a few oaks grew, at Netley, near Southampton Water (SU 450090). The bank was just above the shore and formed the edge of a park. Further search at the Titchfield Common site was again without result, suggesting that the original specimen was probably a late straggler from a colony elsewhere. On 1st July Mr. Appleton returned to the Netley locality but found no more there; however, at another site — West Wood, also at Netley — he swept a further four examples from grassy areas under oaks.

*Sphinginus lobatus* is readily recognized among our smaller Malachiinae. It has some general likeness to a small dark *Axinotarsus*, but is somewhat narrower; the form of the pronotum — longer than broad, the sides contracted and sinuate behind with marked rectangular hind angles — is quite characteristic. The colouring also is distinctive: brassy black above (elytra obviously metallic), extreme basal margin of pronotum (more widely at the angles) and apex of elytra narrowly, yellow; appendages largely dark. It further differs from *Axinotarsus*, but among our species agrees with *Hypebaeus*, in not having the elytra clothed with upright dark hairs; in fact the upperside appears very nearly glabrous. Unlike those genera, the male lacks special structures ('Excitatoren' of German authors) at the elytral apices; but like the former of them, that sex has the second segment of front tarsi prolonged on the outer side beyond the insertion of the third.

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In the work cited above, *S. lobatus* is recorded from Holland, Belgium, the Rhineland and the south-west of mid-Europe, and indicated as very rare. In view of the latter datum, its presence as a breeding species in southern England is perhaps surprising, but (as noticed above) is quite compatible with its known distribution. Regarding the habitat, it may be significant that oaks were a feature of all three sites in S. Hants. where the beetle was taken. Mr. Hammond suggests that it develops in some such situation as dead twigs of oak or other trees, and that this is also probably true of *Axinotarsus*. Certainly *A. ruficollis* O1. and *A. marginalis* Lap. are to be found most freely, where they occur, by sweeping under trees — for *A. pulicarius* F. the available data are insufficient. It is worth noting that *A. marginalis* occurred at each of the *Sphinxinus* sites.

### Acknowledgement

I am most grateful to Mr. David Appleton for a specimen of this very interesting addition to our list, as well as for furnishing all the information connected with its discovery, which he desires me to publish.

### Reference

Freude, H., Harde, K. W., & Lohse, G. A. 1979. *Die Käfer Mitteleuropas*, 6: 66. Krefeld.

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GRAPTOLITHA ORNITOPUS HUFN.: GREY SHOULDER-KNOT IN N. W. KENT. — This species has been only very rarely noted in N. W. Kent; indeed, L. W. Newman in *Woolwich Surveys* (1909) states the moth to be rare, and A. Showler omits the species for Abbey Wood (*Ent. Rec.* 68: 124 *et seq.*). On April 13th, 1980 a male came to my garden m/v light at Dartford, while during the autumn of 1983, from Sept. 30th until Nov. 2nd., more than three dozen were seen, mainly settled upon the trunks of horse chestnut trees in a limited area of parkland at Dartford, and others were seen on tree trunks in an adjacent residential area, five were attracted to my garden m/v light and one was seen at night at ivy blossom.

All the moths settled upon tree trunks, especially the dark trunks of horse chestnut and scots pine, were extremely conspicuous. B. Kettlewell, *Evolution of Melanism* (1973) stated that melanism had not yet appeared in *G. ornitopus* in Britain, although in N. America all the related species of the genus had distinct dark forms. By comparison with the three dozen *ornitopus* seen on tree trunks in the area, only three other moths were observed, single specimens of *Antitype flavicincta* D. & S., *Amphipyra pyramidea* L. (in a deep crevice) and *Xanthorhoe fluctuata* L. — B. K. WEST, 36 Briar Road, Bexley, Kent.